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177 668 ing on Johns Island, the first chapters of the NAACP were being organized in South Carolina. By 1920 there were more than a thousand members in chapters around the state.

But the NAACP was an extremely cautious organization in those early decades. It took as its mission the improvement of black life within the segregated system rather than challenging the state's official racism. Unfortunately, its cautious approach enhanced the white stereotype that blacks were "contented." When the South Carolina Conference of the NAACP was formed in 1929, however, a shift occurred from "uplift" to a quest for equality. Three major legal cases—the teachers' salary equalization suit, the challenge to the all-white Democratic primary, and the suit for admission to the law school of the University of South Carolina—advanced the cause in the 1940s. When *Briggs v. Elliott*, the Clarendon County school case, was filed in 1950, the NAACP legal staff decided to launch a direct attack against public school segregation. *Briggs v. Elliott* was the only case from the Deep South in the package of cases upon which the United States Supreme Court, in a historic decision on May 17, 1954, declared segregated public schools inherently unequal. After the 177 668 875 NAACP's aggressive legal action, the South Carolina legislature passed a law in 1955 forbidding any city or state employee to belong to the NAACP. Septima Clark, a long-time member of the organization, was dismissed from her elementary school teaching position. Although she had taught in the Charleston County school system for almost forty years, the Charleston County School Board denied her retirement pay when she was fired. She then took a job with Highlander Folk School.

891 895 641 •666 In 1957, with training and assistance from Highlander Folk School, Septima Clark and Esau Jenkins began the first citizenship education school on Johns Island. They chose Bernice Robinson to be the first teacher. The classes did not merely stick to reading and writing for voter registration but also discussed the power that people could have if they know how government is organized. The islanders became aware of their rights as citizens and learned ways to achieve them. By 1960

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nearly six hundred registered black voters were added to the rolls in Charleston County through the efforts of the citizenship school.

Guy Carawan first arrived on Johns Island on Christmas eve of 1959, and Esau Jenkins took him to the all-night Christmas Watch Meeting in Moving Star Hall. There Guy encountered African cultural survivals and what he called "the oldest form of Negro folk life still alive today in the United States." He had come to Johns Island from Highlander Folk School to learn about sea island culture and to serve as a chauffeur for Septima Clark, who did not drive. A native Californian with family roots in South Carolina, he had a master's degree in sociology and some training in folklore when he came to live with Esau Jenkins on Johns Island. Septima Clark and Esau Jenkins took Guy to community meetings and church services, where he met and sang with various members of the black community. "With these two beloved leaders to vouch for me," he noted at the time, "I've had the inside track in getting to know people who under different circumstances might be suspicious and unfriendly." He was inspired by the islanders' Afro-Christianity and their "praise house" form of worship. He thrilled to the old sea island spirituals and the islanders' "shouting" style of singing them. He fell in love with the sea island folktales and folk beliefs. He immediately recognized the importance of the rich folk culture he encountered on Johns Island, which would bring him back to the island year after year.

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During his first winter on Johns Island, Guy developed a singing program as a new feature of the citizenship schools. The singing program had two purposes. One was to help keep alive the islanders' beautiful singing traditions. The other was to build group consciousness and boost morale by singing the old spirituals, protest songs, and other folk songs. The singing program proved to have profound inspirational value for everyone who participated.

One day Guy sang a version of "Keep Your Hand on the Plow." He had learned the song in the 1950s as part of the Peoples' Songs Movement. Alice Wine told him she knew "a different echo to that" and sang a sea island version. Guy passed on

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her version, "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," to young civil rights workers at conferences in 1960. Thus it was that the Johns Island version of this spiritual became one of the great inspirational theme songs of the civil rights movement.

In 1961, prompted by the rapid growth of citizenship schools to other islands and the Charleston area, Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson developed the first program to train citizenship school teachers. This curriculum spread throughout the South as participants came from the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Thousands of teachers were trained. Such community leaders as Fannie Lou Hamer in Mississippi and Hosea Williams in Georgia went home to teach and to organize voter registration campaigns. They simply refused to put up with segregation anymore. By 1962, when the major civil rights groups turned their attention to voter registration, they were able to use the approach pioneered in the citizenship schools between 1957 and 1961 because by then it was clear that the approach worked. Thus the citizenship schools on Johns Island were the foundation for the voting rights movement and played a major role in the overthrow of Jim Crow.

SINCE 1959 Guy had spent part of each year working with the citizenship school on Johns Island. In 1961 Guy married Candie Anderson; and in 1963 they moved to Johns Island with their small son, Evan. During the next two years they shared in the life and fellowship of the black community around Moving Star Hall. Their purpose was to help preserve some of the older black folk culture on the island by bringing honor and recognition to it. As Guy wrote to Pete Seeger in 1965, "These days, you can go to any one of the major folk festivals at Berkeley, UCLA, Chicago, Philadelphia, or Newport and see some of the finest folk talent in the country. But the communities from which these people come have been neglected. Leadbelly and his music are forgotten in Shreveport, Louisiana. I'm hoping our work on Johns Island (South Carolina) will provide an example of what can be done in other areas. It would be a shame to let this music die at the roots." To that end Guy and Candie

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accompanied only by foot and hand rhythms; the service became much more spontaneous, like that in Moving Star Hall.

In the intervening years, this evolution toward more modern forms has continued. Moving Star Hall is no longer being used for the intimate and intense prayer meetings or for the all-night watch meetings attended primarily by the older people. These important gatherings now take place in the larger churches. The Hall is currently home to a younger congregation, a Pentecostal church pastored by David Hunter, a member of one of the families very important to the original book. Here you find, along with more modern gospel songs and sermons, echoes of the old form of worship, but with the accompaniment of snare drum replacing the complex hand and foot rhythms of the shout. In the larger island churches, there is a vigorous contemporary religious culture with gospel choirs, wonderful organ accompaniment, and powerful preachers. But the older, more spontaneous forms of expression—raising a song by the spirit, taking it into a shout, testifying and preaching when moved by feelings—are not so easily integrated into the more formal structure of the service. There is a feeling from some of the younger people that it will be no great loss if this older level of expression dies out completely. One member of Wesley put it most succinctly when he explained, "There is a battle going on in the church now to get rid of all the old-style religion and singing. The battle is going on subconsciously. It's not going on knowingly because if it was put on the table, folk would take another look at it." It is our profound hope that people *will* take another look at it and make sure a place for the older expression remains. For this deepest layer of cultural tradition is marked by great complexity and beauty—the product of generations of community creativity.

In the 1960s the most unusual and modern institution on Johns Island was the Progressive Club, a successful consumers' cooperative owned and operated by some of the poorest people on the island. It contained a large grocery store and the only gym on the island and served as a center for adult education and voter registration.

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*Mr. Esau Jenkins*

## "MR. JENKINS, I WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH TO BECOME A REGISTERED CITIZEN."

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On Johns Island, in the year of 1948, I saw the condition of the people who had been working on the plantations for many years. And I knew that we were not able to do the things that would need to be done unless we could get people registered citizens.

I operated a bus from Johns Island to Charleston carrying people to their jobs. So I decided to get a group in the bus in the mornings and teach them how to read the part of the Constitution that we have to read before we are able to become registered citizens.

One of these mornings I was teaching the group to read the Constitution, a woman by the name of Alice Wine said to me, "Mr. Jenkins, I would like very much to become a registered citizen, but I cannot read this Constitution because I did not get but just so far in school, and I cannot pronounce these words. But if you are willing to help me, I will show you that I would be one that would be willing to vote in every election."

So I decided to pay more attention to her, and I helped her at more times than I do the regular times when we have school in the bus, to get her prepared to register.

*Mrs. Alice Wine*

## EVERYBODY READ AND GET A PAPER

I come around to registering through Mr. Esau Jenkins. I used to ride his bus, and he said, "I want to carry you down to register." I said, "I can't read those hard thing yet," and he get the book and he start to learn me.

He start to help me read and when I get to them hard words I feel like jump it. My tongue so heavy until I couldn't pronounce the words, you know. But he said to me, "No, the hard word is the things for you to learn." And so me and them girls (and some of the girls could read 'em—dum-de-dum-dum-dum—right on through, right on through, but I couldn't do it), we tried 'em.

Then he take we up to a registration board on Society Street, and we get in line. Everybody read and get a paper, read and get a paper. And I be in line next to this girl, and she read and she stammer. And then the man put me for read, and I read those things just like I been know 'em. And I didn't know them things, I swear!

Mr. Jenkins figure I going fail. He been right outside there on the corner for listen. And when I come out he said, "Miss Wine, you get it?" I say, "Yes, sir." Say, "Well, sir!" I say, "I thought I couldn't read them hard thing." Them thing was *too* hard!

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*Mr. Esau Jenkins*

## EVERYBODY IS JUBILANT FOR THE HIGHLANDER FOLK SCHOOL

The Negroes outnumber the white here 'round about two and a third to one. The potential voting strength for Negroes is about two thousand against around one thousand white, if we could get them all registered. They have been doing it much faster now, because I know the last ten years before the new registration started, it took us ten years to get seventy-five or a hundred person registered, and then starting back in 1957–1958 it got better. Since then we put nearly four hundred people on the books. They are civic-minded now, and they want to take part in it. I think so much progress has been made in the last few years due to the citizenship school that was started here by the Highlander Folk School.

I first attended Highlander in 1954. They asked each individual to give the immediate problem in his locality. My immediate problem was adult education, because so many person were here who couldn't read and write and I know this condition, because I would have been almost in the same condition if I didn't go back to school. So I asked the Highlander Folk School officials if it were possible to help us set up night schools for these people to help them become better citizens.

They said if I could find a place, could find a teacher, they could help take care of the expenses. So they did. And that was very, very important to helping us to get as many persons registered on this island.

And then people on Wadmalaw and Edisto Islands found out later the reason Johns Island was so successful in registering Negroes. They ask me if it's possible to help them to get an adult-school. So the next year when I went to Highlander, when it comes time for immediate problem again, I brought in Wadmalaw and Edisto, and they again say they will help if I could find a place and the teachers. I found the place, and today Wadmalaw registered more Negroes than ever registered in the history of Wadmalaw. In the 1964 election Wadmalaw had about two hundred Negro votes for Johnson. Most of the white folks were voting for Goldwater, but Negroes voted enough to hold it in the Democratic column. That's the only area in Charleston County that went for Johnson.

The same thing is happening on Edisto and all over the county. In 1964 in the county there were 'round about five or six thousand Negroes registered. In 1964 almost fourteen thousand. So everybody is jubilant for the Highlander Folk School, who have helped them to see the light.

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*Mr. Esau Jenkins*

## KNOWING HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

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We had gotten quite a few people registered through that adult citizenship school, but they did not have the political education or understanding of voting. So we decided to teach them what the ballot means. I started what we called the "second step" political education school, because the people who registered to vote would vote because we told them to vote.

There were many persons who did not know how many men in the House of Representatives; why Charleston County has eleven in the House; how many men in the Senate; how many congressional districts we have in South Carolina; who are the men elected and sent to Washington to represent these two districts. We feel that if these people know about these things, they will be more interested in voting, and they will help others.

As you know as well as I do, that if a person doesn't know a football game, a basketball game, neither a baseball game, he hears other people laugh and sees how other persons play, but he doesn't know *who* plays well, because he doesn't know the game.

The same thing goes with some of the people who don't know anything about political action, so we felt like it was our responsibility to teach those people and have them well-informed.

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Along with political education, we have taught a good many persons how to sign checks, fill out money orders, how to crochet, how to sew, how to fill out blanks for their drivers' licenses. I think it was a great success.

Then after I was elected President of the Citizens' Committee of Charleston and Charleston County, I set up what we call a voter registration and information center, to which place people will come in for information. Whatever information they need, they come to this center.

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*Mr. Esau Jenkins*

## "MAN, ESAU JENKINS' NAME ON THE VOTING MACHINE!"

159 666 891 Then I ran for the school trusteeship on this island. I ran knowing that I wouldn't have won unless a miracle had been done. They had three white persons to run. I made four. And I came out third, so I got more votes than one of the white candidates. That scared some of the white folks here, and the man who is on the county council decided that they would change voting for trustees on the school board. They would have it be appointed because Johns Island strength was growing too much.

The reason why I ran is because I wanted the Negroes to know that it is their privilege to go into any office they're qualified to handle. They are taxpayers and they have just as much right to run for public office as the white persons. I ran because some Negroes thought that if a Negro name ever was placed on a voting machine, that person would be killed. Or they thought that a Negro's name couldn't be placed on a voting machine.

159 666 And so I ran and my name was placed in alphabetical order and they saw it. And when one of the guys went in and saw my name, he went and told the rest, say, "Man, Esau Jenkins' name on that voting machine," says, "You better go on down there and vote." And that year we had about ninety-nine percent of the Negroes who registered vote. Encourage them ever since to vote.

*Mr. Esau Jenkins*

## WE'RE NOT FOR SALE

(661) After we got started and the Negroes started registering, then a bribe was made to me. They sent someone to offer me whatever I want if I would stop teaching Negroes to register and vote and go along with the white folks. Well, I didn't accept it.

159 891 661 185 My argument at that time was that we need a high school on Johns Island and we need to get our children off their feet who are walking ten miles per day to try to get an education. They walk in the rain, in the cold, and the sleet and we believe it cause a health hazard. So I told this man who offered me the money, "We're not for sale, and we're only going to support

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159 have forty to fifty children to one teacher, and have to carry 'em from
891 scratch to seventh grade.
177 So we know that was a terrible condition, and that's the condition that
185 I want to try to eliminate. And that's my reason for not taking this bribe. I
[661] know that we wouldn't have gotten anywhere, not as long as I was willing to take bribe and go along with the white folks. I had made some enemy by not taking the bribe. I had made some of my people afraid of me because I kept on fighting for the Negroes' right. But I didn't stop.

159 The white folks cut off this one big plantation that I used to haul to, as I
494 had three buses and two trucks. Sometimes I make sixty dollars, sixty to
177 eighty dollars a day, with three or four vehicle—twenty dollars for each one
[465] —to carry the people there. They cut that off, but I wouldn't stop. I keep on driving and keep on fighting.

878 Since we have gotten the high school, now we have had quite a few
876 children graduated from the high school here on the island. Since then we
873 have been able to get this consolidated grammar school, and we have buses.
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*Mr. Esau Jenkins*

## WE DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE WHEN WE GO INTO COURT

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● 666 I'll tell you another way voting was able to help us. I could remember not too long ago, we didn't have a chance when we go into court. I remember a day I was riding with a man coming to Johns Island from Charleston, and a white person ran into the back of his truck. When we stop to find out what happen to the person, the law took side with the person who ran into the back of his truck, and he had to go to court.

We all thought that the judge would say, "Well, somebody ran into the back of the truck, certainly seem like that person is wrong." Unfortunately, he said that the colored man was wrong. He didn't have a chance in the court. But we decided to change that thing by getting people to see the importance of citizenship, registration and voting.

159 We got them to be interested in organizing what we call the Progressive
494 Club. I emphasize the word "progressive" which mean look upward, do
something better. And in this club we told them that if you're not registered
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159 to start with, you're going to have to *become* a registered citizen if you join.
● 111 And we ask every individual to pay twenty-five cent per month. For what?
474 Just in case when you go into these unjust courts, your money pools and
692 somebody'll stand the bonds, or pay the fine. Now things are changed. The time would come when this same magistrate who have never listened to Negroes would need their vote.

159 One year when he ran for the third time, the white folks decided to vote
177 against him—not all the white folks, just about fifty percent of them. And
666 he was thinking about dropping out of the election. He came to me and ask,
664 "What can you all do? I understand that the white folks is against me
185 because in the court sometime ago I was little bit lenience with Negro."

So I told him if he would promise that he would treat Negroes better, make them realize that they are human being when they come into the court, not charge them for everything or just assume that they are wrong, but just give them what belongs to them—if they are right, let them know they are right—I said, "We will vote for you. We got a few Negroes voting. If you got fifty percent of your people, the rest of the Negroes certainly would turn the tide."

And when that night came, he won by the many Negroes had registration certificate. That change the situation. That magistrate now, whenever our people go into the court, he is very frank and fair with us. And so for that reason, we felt like the more we could get people registered, the better it would be.

***Mrs. Alice Wine***

## HE IS A WONDERFUL CONQUEROR

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474 We start the Progressive Club with about two or three hundred head of people in '48 or '49. We used to meet in Moving Star Hall every third Sunday and pay twenty-five cents a head. And after we done pay out for that piece of property we got now, we stop paying monthly dues.

159 There was a schoolhouse there, but we turn 'em into a store after we
443 buy 'em. We put all our money together and open 'em up. And we call 'em
474 Progressive Club. We been growing and growing. We is still in debt, but
185 we are going on. And Mr. Jenkins, he is so good, he is so kind, so soft-

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*Mr. Esau Jenkins*

## OUT OF EGYPT I AM GOING TO CALL MY SONS

159 185 443 474 Now if anybody is happy, it ought to be Esau Jenkins, the person who is talking here to you. Why? Twelve years and some months ago in this community, I organized a club--what we call the Progressive Club.

You folks have helped me start as a man and form a group. You are selling groceries, you are selling gasoline. Besides that, some time the early part of this month you have paid out all your debt and yet left $175 to add to your store.

159 185 When I organized this Progressive Club, I could count the number of voters on my one hand, and I don't have but five fingers.

178 In twelve years you have caused this whole island to change. Today you got school buses running by your door and picking up your children, carrying them to a high school on Johns Island. Today you can say that my children will be educated--at least get a high school education on Johns Island.

(666) Today you could say in the last election we built up our voting strength so high until the white men in Charleston have to ask us to be in the polls on Johns Island and Edisto and Wadmalaw. Negroes have helped work for the Democratic party.

Now you could not have said that twelve years ago because you didn't vote. You didn't have a school. But today you have children getting ready to compete with anybody's children, because of your cooperation.

My friends, I want you to help me that I may go on, come what may. There are any number of times that I have walked alone. There are a lot of people who are afraid, because if they be seen walking along with me, the white folks might say, "Well, he is one of these persons who are fighting me."

But share it with Esau Jenkins, and thank God that God has helped us. We made an achievement that we are not ashamed of. You don't know how much you have done, friends--how many people are talking about what you have done; how many people are reading about what you have done.

Together let us go--sisters, brothers, blacks, whites, yellows, whatnot. We are all God's people, so we got to go together. And friends, I think all over the world today, people who love freedom are saying this morning, "Out of Egypt I'm going to call my sons."

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*Mr. Myles Horton**

## THE PEOPLE OF JOHNS ISLAND DESERVE TRIBUTE

The citizenship schools were inspired by Esau Jenkins who was trying to teach his Johns Island bus passengers to pass the South Carolina literacy test required for voting. In a 1953 Highlander Folk School workshop he had asked for help. In an effort to respond, we spent the next two years acquainting ourselves with the culture of the island and with the people. We found out by living and working with them what their problems were and that they wanted to be voting citizens.

Bernice Robinson was chosen to teach the first citizenship school because she respected the people and, having had no teaching experience, would be nonjudgmental and experimental. She began the first class in the back room of a cooperative store by saying, "I am not a teacher; we are here to learn together. You're going to teach me as much as I am going to teach you."

The curriculum was developed day by day. They learned to write letters, to order from catalogs, and fill out money orders. They made stories about the vegetables they grew and the tools they used, the chairs and tables in the room. They moved on to reading the Declaration of Human Rights, which hung on the wall, and the South Carolina constitution, which was a prerequisite of becoming a voter.

Music and singing familiar songs livened up the long evenings and blended with the joy of learning. Singing sea island folk songs, spirituals, and protest songs helped build the group's consciousness and boosted morale as together they tackled the difficult task of learning to read and write.

This pioneer citizenship school, which met biweekly for three months, grew from fourteen to thirty-seven students. It was soon followed by a second school. Out of the first two schools, sixty people, two-thirds the total enrollment, passed the literacy test for voting. That is, they "graduated."

Esau Jenkins had an explanation for this accomplishment. He said, "No one wants anything more than to be a first-class citizen. That is what makes you learn what you have to learn." Their motivation was for an achievable goal rooted in their culture. Although each individual had to learn to read for him or herself, they studied as a group, they supported and encouraged each other as they painfully struggled to read. As they took the first steps in learning to read and write, they made use of what they had learned without delay. The process that evolved was simple and easy to explain and could easily be adopted elsewhere, making the multiplying process easy.

The enthusiastic new voters immediately spread the word to neighboring South Carolina and Georgia sea islands. Soon the citizenship schools were started on Edisto and Wadmalaw islands, and before the three months period ended, half those enrolled had learned to read and write well enough to pass

*Founder and former director of the Highlander Folk School.

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the literacy test and become registered voters. Some had organized their community for discussions of civic issues and voter registration campaigns. Later, as on Johns Island, they would run for public office and provide leadership in the emerging civil rights movement.

In 1961 the citizenship school program was transferred from Highlander to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In the meantime Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson had developed a residential program for training volunteers who wanted to be citizenship school teachers.

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Before becoming the educational arm of the SCLC, the number of teachers trained were counted in the hundreds, but after the transfer, Septima Clark reported that they were counted in the thousands. More impressive than these figures was the vitality of the educational process which set in motion a liberating force that gave dignity and collective power to thousands of black people throughout the South.

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The people of Johns Island deserve tribute for the role they played in the origin and development of a citizenship/literacy movement that became a vital part of the civil rights movement and has achieved international recognition. Special tribute is due to the first pioneer citizenship school, created by a teacher who had never taught before and her students who had never been to school, and to the coordinator Septima Clark and especially to Esau Jenkins whose idea it was in the first place.

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*Mrs. Septima Clark*

## AFTER I CAME BACK FROM HIGHLANDER, I DECIDED I SHOULD GET ESAU TO GO

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I knew Esau Jenkins when he was a boy of fourteen and came to my school to learn how to read. All his life Esau devoted himself to improving conditions on Johns Island.

Esau had a bus that he drove from Johns Island to Charleston and back, carrying tobacco workers and longshoremen to work. One morning one of the women on the bus made Esau a proposal. "I don't have much schooling, Esau," she said to him. "But I would like to be somebody. I'd like to hold up my head with other people; I'd like to be able to vote. Esau, if you'll help me a little when you have the time. I'll be glad to learn the laws and get qualified to vote. If I do, I promise you I'll register and I'll vote."

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That appealed to Esau, and he agreed to help her. He had a portion of the South Carolina laws typed up, those that pertained to registration and voting, and he passed them out to the people who rode his bus. To those who couldn't read or couldn't understand the language of the law, he patiently explained the requirements. When he was waiting for his passengers to assemble or when his bus arrived in town a few minutes early, he would discuss those laws with them.

The woman who asked Esau for help was Mrs. Alice Wine. She had a marvelous ability to memorize; she memorized the whole section of the constitution that they were studying. Soon she was ready to go and be registered.

While she was standing in line awaiting her turn, one of the women ahead of her, in reading a section of the constitution, mispronounced the word "miscegenation." Immediately Mrs. Wine pronounced it correctly. The registrar spoke out sharply, "No coaching, please!" When it came her time, Mrs. Wine "read" every word perfectly by reciting from memory. She was given her registration certificate, and she was one happy soul.

But Mrs. Wine wasn't satisfied. She really wanted to know how to read. She asked Esau if there was any kind of school where she could learn to read and write.

After I came back from going to Highlander the first time, I decided that I should get Esau to go. We went up there and found out that many people could talk to him and give him help.

Myles Horton had been into Charleston to try to get people to come up to Highlander. Now, through Esau, he had a way to reach people. One Christmas Myles went down there with his children and spent the whole Christmas season just walking around the island and talking. He stayed in Esau's house, and the people really enjoyed him. Myles had a way of speaking to people that made them become endeared to him.

Myles always told people about the injustices that were there, that they had not seen. He said, "Now, you know, any day I can go back with my own people and not have to endure these things, but you have to live with them always. I want you to see if you can get to the place where you can register and vote. You need to think about what you can do for these children that are coming along."

(113) Septima's words are from her autobiographical book *Ready from Within: Septima Clark and the Civil Rights Movement*, written with Cynthia Stokes Brown and published in 1986 by Wild Trees Press, Box 378, Navarro, Calif. 95463.

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read and to sign their name. And they would say quietly, "I can't write" or "I can't read that well," and that's how I found out where each one of those students was on that first night.

The people we worked with were denied an education and so we had to teach them how to read and write. I don't remember when they got a full nine months elementary school on Johns Island. They didn't have anything but a little four-month school when Septima was teaching over there. When the people needed them to work in the fields, the farmers just went and knocked on the school house and the kids had to come out. So they didn't even get a full four-month education.

And then they told me the things they wanted to learn, which was to be able to write letters to their relatives that live elsewhere and read letters from them, rather than have to carry them to the white people they worked for to read them for them. They wanted to know how to do money orders. So then I started to teach them what they wanted to learn.

And of course they were conscious of the voting process because Esau had run for school board in 1954. He didn't win because he didn't have enough blacks registered on the island to put him in. They had three positions open and he came in fourth. Well, after that election they started appointing the school board members. Therefore, the students knew the importance of getting registered to vote. So it wasn't hard to sell them that idea. But like I said, I worked with them on the things they wanted to know first.

We had no idea of the school spreading. We were just doing what Esau asked us to do for his people on Johns Island. Well, they started registering to vote, and then they encouraged other people to go and register to vote. People on Johns Island were registering to vote so fast that people on Wadmalaw wanted it. Then Edisto wanted it. Then we wound up in the north area of Charleston with two classes.

*Mrs. Bernice Robinson*

## THE PROGRAM WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

By 1961 so many people were asking for the program from all around the South. Myles felt it was getting to the point where we were spreading ourselves too thin. The best thing for us to do was to contact organizations and have them send people in to Highlander to be trained as teachers. We would work with them for one week and train them as teachers. Then they could go back and set up classes.

And then we talked about second-stage classes—political education. Our classes didn't just stick to reading and writing to register to vote. We talked about the power that was in the hands of the people if they know the set-up of the government. So we talked about the set-up and who you go to for what.

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*Mrs. Bernice Robinson*

## I DON'T THINK PEOPLE ON JOHNS ISLAND KNOW WHAT AN IMPACT THE PROGRAM HAD

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There were tens of thousands of teachers and students who went through that program. It lasted until 1970, and I think that what happened is that foundations thought that we had achieved what we were working for. We had the Voting Rights Bill and we had accomplished desegregation and we had gotten blacks elected to office in all these different states, so the money started drying up for the program.

The curriculum we developed on Johns Island became the curriculum that went all across the South. It was all the things the people had said they wanted to know and learn. I don't think the people on Johns Island know what an impact the program they were involved in had—how it went so far and so wide.

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*Mrs. Bernice Robinson*

## ALL THIS IS AN OUTGROWTH OF PEOPLE FEELING EMPOWERED

On Johns Island you see the results now really, the aggressiveness of the people and the confidence they had in moving forward, when you look at the sea island clinic, and you look at the senior citizen center and the nursing home and the housing project for senior citizens. All this is an outgrowth of people feeling empowered by being able to read and write and understanding how to go about pressing for things like that. They became very active in the PTA and things that they didn't bother with before because they couldn't read or they couldn't understand what was going down. Before they had a high school on the island, a lot of people who had relatives over here in the city would send the children over here to go to school, to try to get an education. And they had to do that for a long time before they got the high school.

But all these things that finally came about, came about from these same people that learned how to read and write and fight for their kids to get a decent education right in their own home rather than having to cross the bridge to come into town to get an education.

*Mrs. Ethel Grimball*

## WE'RE GOING TO VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATES WE WANT

People are still voting today. Blacks now rule Wadmalaw Island for the Democratic party. Before this, the white people in the Democratic party brought a slate in and then they immediately passed that slate. My father and others said, "We're not going to go along with a slate that they bring in. We're going to vote for the candidates we want." And that's how we changed that situation on Wadmalaw Island. After the voter registration drives, the people got more interested in the importance of voting. Therefore, we got a lot of people on the books. Eighty-five percent of the population on Wadmalaw is black. Most of the whites left the Democratic party when the blacks got control of it. Before that the whites ruled everything on Wadmalaw Island. It was the tradition.

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*Mrs. Alice Wine*

## EVERYTHING IS CHANGED NOW

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I still vote. I want to vote for right, but I don't get it. My mother always told me, "You see somebody that jump, you jump too. Cause you, one, can't do nothing. Among the majority, your word just go for nothing." But the people gave us our right, seems like they take our right from us. But it don't stop me from vote. I still vote for the President.

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And everything is changed now. The world so tough today.

The older people sang "I Will Overcome" because they had a hard time. They had to row boat to go to the city and carry their peas and corn and potatoes, rice and things. They had a hard time, living and raising their children. Them people had to work with their children on their back. Rebeltime people were mean. But God changed those people. That's a just God. He don't walk knock-kneed. Those oldtime foreparents was something else, I tell you. And one of these days they were able to overcome. They were able to buy the land. Money was scarce, but they had a chance to pay a dollar or two dollars for a piece of ground.